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TALKBACK

Rockers vs. rock writer, Round 2

On Monday, our critic told you what he thought of Def Leppard (not much). Today, you respond in kind

Last Monday night, we asked Juan Rodriguez, rock critic for The Gazette for 11 years, to jump back into the fray after a 20-year layoff.

The object of his first review since 1980: Def Leppard. A sample of his prose: "You only had to listen to their execrable two-song acoustic set to realize they needed the blustery volume to hide their lack of talent."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the spots hit the fan in the Def Leppard camp. Fans from Dollard to Denver rose up to protest the review. Here's a sample of what they said by E-mail.

✦ ✦ ✦

Just had to write to you after I heard about and then read the inaccurate, scathing and poorly written review of Def Leppard's show. The author (if you want to call him that) even admits that he has not done this type of work in ages and I think you did your readers and the band a terrible disservice by not bothering to send someone on the assignment that knows what they are doing. He obviously should find a new line of work and you should find a competent reporter.

Liz F.

✦ ✦ ✦

I'm a 27-year-old graduate student who is an avid music fan, including "heavy metal" and music much more aggressive than Def Leppard. I've never written to any form of media with the intention of voicing my opinion. However, after reading the concert review for Def Leppard by Juan Rodriguez, I felt compelled to share my thoughts.

I think your newspaper might do better to enlist the services of someone who at least acknowledges that "metal" is a valid form of music.

Film and restaurant critics should be knowledgeable and well-versed in their areas of critique. So should be the case with music reviewers. Mr. Rodriguez should have stayed home (Monday) night and such an article should not have been printed. It was truly a waste of space. The 5,800 fans who enjoyed the concert are proof that the band is not talentless and they are still making good, fun music.

I have heard and/or owned every song and album the band has recorded. I like some songs more than others and some albums better than others. My point is that Mr. Rodriguez probably isn't familiar with half of the band's material and he probably doesn't even care.

Def Leppard is definitely a talented band, and they do not deserve flak from ignorant critics who don't appreciate the music or the tenacity of the band to stick together and make their own style of music regardless of the misfortunes they have endured. I have respect for a man with one arm (Rick Allen) who has improvised a new way of playing and proves that he can still play the drums night after night. Def Leppard is certainly not my favourite band, but they have lasted through the '80s and '90s and promise to continue going strong in the future.

As for a review, the music was loud, as it should be for a metal concert. The guitars, bass and drums were heavy, melodic and just plain groovy, which is fine for any true Def Leppard fan. The (band's) wide array of hits over the years provides for musical variety, something opener Joan Jett lacks.

I'll admit I was not impressed by the acoustic interlude, but it does allow band members to take a breather, especially the drummer. As well, the concert was shorter than I expected. At an hour and a half, I thought the band could have extended the set with a few more rockin' tunes.

Bottom line, the music is uplifting, catchy and fun. I don't attend many concerts and I've never seen Def Leppard live, but I know their music and I thought it would be an entertaining evening out with my girlfriend (she was singing and dancing away long after the concert was over). I was not disappointed. Def Leppard is a great musical band and they gave Montrealers a great performance.

Chris Stefik

✦ ✦ ✦

Mr. Juan Rodriguez wrote a music review in your paper for a Def Leppard concert he attended. I have no problem that he felt it was a poor concert. That is his opinion, and he is welcome to it. What disgusts me is a paragraph I read regarding tragedies suffered by the band. He mentions a car accident that left the drummer, Rick Allen, without a left arm.

He also mentions the fact that they lost their lead guitarist due to alcohol and drug poisoning. The fact that these two facts made it into a concert review is absurd.

To berate the band because of these tragedies is the most disgusting piece of journalism I have read. Yes, Allen was driving recklessly. An American football player just died from a car accident in which he was speeding. Did the title of that story in the Montreal *Gazette* read "Oops!"?

Allen has been a one-armed drummer for 16 years. He has blazed trails that were previously unheard of. Since his accident, Allen has recorded his drums on several albums that have sold more than 20 million copies worldwide. That's a lot of people buying those albums saying that Allen is doing an amazing job.

Mr. Rodriguez did not say that Allen was performing poorly that night. He mentioned the accident as if to say that a one-armed drummer has no right to be on stage. Why else would he mention it? Has Mr. Rodriguez ever considered that Allen is also an inspiration to disabled kids that look at him and realize that anything is possible?

I know Mr. Rodriguez knows how important inspiration is. After all, there was a horse's ass somewhere that inspired him.

Appalled Reader

✦ ✦ ✦

I hope this gets to Juan Rodriguez. No, I do not live in Canada, I live in Denver. I cannot for the life of me believe that you are a music critic/reporter. I have never in my life seen such a cold and cruel article. Your review of Def Leppard's performance as I said is not only wrong but cruel!

Yes, I have seen them lately. I don't know where you were standing or sitting, but you must have had a chip on your shoulder when you went in. It sounds to me like this was personal and in my opinion this article should not have been printed.

Yes, I do believe in freedom of speech and the right to your own opinion, but I am not such a cruel person that I have to slander anyone in print. (Def Leppard is) one of the few good bands left that can not only still play their old songs but create new ones that are well written and well constructed.

This band, according to my local critics, is in top form. Maybe you should think about an apology.

Vicki Emmitt

"He should find a new line of work and you should find a competent reporter."

PETER MARTIN, GAZETTE

Def Lep's Joe Elliott: writer inspired by horse's ass?

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